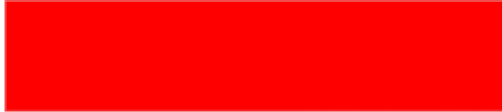
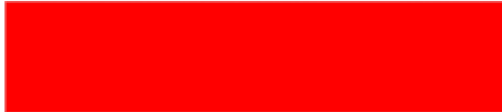
About Nepali Congress

BACKGROUND




The territorial foundation of Nepal as it exists today was laid in the mid-eighteenth century when small principalities in the Himalayan region were unified under the leadership of King Prithvi Narayan Shah of Gorkha. Nepal has remained an independent sovereign state since then. In 1846, Jung Bahadur Rana carried out a bloody coup, stripped the Shahs of political power and established a hereditary all-powerful Rana regime. While other independent countries in the world were going through a scientific technological and industrial revolution, the Nepali society remained isolated and feudalism continued as the order of the time.

Scattered and sporadic opposition to the Rana Rule began immediately after the First World War, but it did not gather any momentum until the end of the Second World War. The anti-Rana armed movement led by Nepali Congress culminated in the eventual fall of the Rana regime in 1951. The Nepali Congress has occupied a pivotal position in the annals of contemporary politics of Nepal since then.

GENESIS OF NEPALI CONGRESS


The Nepali Congress was formed in exile in India in 1946 as a result of merger of Nepali National Congress and Nepal Democratic Party. Its original objectives were:

- To raise political consciousness of the people to overthrow the century old Rana rule as a precondition for liquidation of feudalism.

- To establish a democratic system of government with constitutional monarchy.

Since its establishment the party has been in the forefront of political strggle in the cause of democracy, pluralism, human rights and rule of law. It has also waged a ceaseless battle againt feudalism and other remnants of the old order. It has always stood for liberal and modern values. In 1956 the Nepali Congress adopted democratic socialism as its ideology for socio-economic transformation. The party's struggle has been marked by both peaceful and armed means. In the course of its struggle the Nepali Congress has gone through several ups and downs, trials and tribulations. Thousands of its activists have been killed, jailed, tortured, exiled and their properties confiscated. In practically all general elections held in a democratic set up, Nepali Congress has been voted to power.

IMPORTANT LANDMARKS

January 25, 26, 1947 (Magh 12-13, 2003 B.S.) – Nepali National Congress was formed and inaugurated; Tanka Prasad Acharya, who was in Jail for life-imprisonment, became President and B.P. Koirala became Acting President.

March 13, 1947 (Falgun 30, 2003 B.S.) – Launched a massive countrywide anti-Rana demonstration. Started labour movement and strike in Jute Mill in Biratnagar which was led by Girija Prasad Koirala, the present Prime Minister and the Present Party President.

April 9, 1950 (Chaitra 27, 2006 B.S.) – Formation of Nepali Congress through the merger of Nepali National Congress (established on January 25, 1947) and Nepal Democratic Congress (established on August 4, 1948) at Calcutta, India and call for an armed struggle against the Rana regime. Matrika Prasad Koirala became the President.

September 26-27, 1950 (Ashwin 10-11, 2007 B.S.) – Adoption of the strategy of the armed revolution to overthrow the Rana regime at Bairgania Conference.

November 6, 1950 (Kartik 21, 2007 B.S.) – Beginning of the armed revolution which was supported by King Tribhuvan who went into exile. Some Indian socialists fought as comrades-in-arms and Burmese socialists supported with the arms and ammunitions.

Novemeber 11, 1950 (Kartik 26, 2007 B.S.) – Armed Struggle started, with the attack in Birgunj.

February 18, 1951 (Falgun 7, 2007 B.S.) – Fall of Rana regime, formation of Rana-Nepali Congress coalition government on parity basis with Rana Mohan Shumshere as Prime Minister, again.

B.P. Koirala was Home Minister and leader of Nepali Congress representing the party at the coalition government which lasted only for nine months. The achievements of coalition government were the enactment of the Interim Constitution of 1951, establishment of the Supreme Court and independent Public Service Commission, initiation of the concept of abolition of Birta (tax free land) system and promotion of financial, social and technical services (education, health, transport, communication, banking, agriculture and industry, etc.)

November 16, 1951 (Mansir 1, 2008B.S.) – Matrika Prasad Koirala then President of Nepali Congress, nominated by H.M. the King as the Prime Minister – the first commoner Prime Minister under the democratic set up.

May 23-26, 1952 (Jeth 10-13, 2009 B.S.) – The Fifth National Convention held at Janakpur B.P. Koirala was elected the Party President.

July 25, 1952 (Shrawan 10, 2009 B.S.) – Matrika Prasad Koirala, Prime Minister expelled by Nepali Congress from Party membership as he was found violating the party principles and acting against the Constitution of 1951. His actions resulted in transferring people's political power into the hands of the King. Instead of holding the election he went on hand-picking persons and parties to form governments of his choice.

January 24-25, 1956 (Magh 10-11, 2012 B.S.) – The sixth National Convention held in Birgunj which adopted the principles of democratic socialism and decentralization for social transformation; Subarna Shumshere was elected as the President.

May 23, 1957 (Jeth 10, 2014 B.S.) – Special National Convention held at Biratnagar, Morang, B.P. Koirala became the Party President.

December 7, 1957 (Mansir 22, 2014 B.S.) – Nepali Congress led Civil Disobedience Movement in cooperation with other political parties in demanding to form an elected government as laid down in the interim Constitution. The Movement stopped when an agreement was reached with King Mahendra to hold an election for the parliament.

May 15, 1958 (Jeth 2, 2015 B.S.) – Participated in a multi-party caretaker government led by Subarna Shumshere to hold general election.

February 18, 1959 (Falgun 7, 2015 B.S.) – First parliamentary election held nationwide. Nepali Congress secured two thirds majority (74 out of 109 seats of Parliament).

May 27, 1959 (Jeth 13, 2016 B.S.) – Formation of the first elected government under the Prime Ministership of B.P. Koirala. The Nepali Congress government moved towards implementation of land and agrarian reform, reform of administstration and prison conditions, developing a free and independent Judiciary system, building up of a police force to maintain law and order, eradication of corruption, economic programmes to better utilize and conserve natural resources, establishment of a National Planning Board, construction of irrigation, drinking water, transport and communication facilities, village and local development programmes, establishment of Nepal Industrial Development Corporation to initiate small, medium and bigger size industries, initiation of Village Panchayats and town municipalities, promotion of health care facilities and education to make primary education free and compulsory within ten years, streamlining of Tribhuvan University, nationalization of big commercial forests and local forest management by the communities, use of the army in development work especially in road construction.
Party workers were preparing for work as development corps, and they were planning and implementing district and local level development programmmes.

May 7-13, 1960 (Baishakh 25-31, 2016 B.S.) – B.P. Koirala – elected as the Party President by the Seventh National Convention held at Kathmandu.

December 15, 1960 (Paush 1, 2017 B.S.) – Coup d'etate by King Mahendra with the help of the army. Dissolution of the elected government and parliament, ban on political parties, suspension of civil liberties and start of reign of terror under Panchayat rule for 30 years against pro-democratic elements and Nepali Congress workers in particular. Nepali Congress went into exile in India and started its movement to restore democracy in Nepal. International Union of socialist Youth (IUSY) from its Bureau Meeting at Berlin during 9-12 February 1962 and Socialist International Meeting at Oslo on June 2, 1962 condemned the Royal Coup and the repressive measures adopted against Nepali Congress workers and expressed their full solidarity with the Nepali Congress comrades fighting both from within and outside the country.

January 25-27, 1961 (Magh 12-14, 2017 B.S.) – Conference of Nepali Congress activists held in Patna, India under the leadership of Subarna Shumshere Rana, Deputy Prime Minister in the deposed government appealed for a non-violent movement against the Royal Coup and restoration of democracy. Merging of various political parties in Nepali Congress, including the main parliamentary opposition party Gorakha Parishad. Peaceful demonstration countrywide in which more than 2000 people were arrested.

December 1961 (Mansir 2018 B.S.) – Start and continuation of a full scale armed revolt. However Indo-Chinese conflict of 1962 was perceived as a danger to Nepal's territorial integrity which forced Nepali Congress to call off the armed insurrection on November 8, 1962 (Kartik 23, 2019 B.S.) and adoption of peaceful means for struggle.

October 30, 1968 (Kartik 14, 2025 B.S.) – Release of B.P. Koirala and other leaders after eight years in prison, Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, Speaker of the dismissed parliament was released more than a year later but to be arrested again and again.

February 12, 1969 (Falgun 1, 2025 B.S.) – B.P. Koirala's call for restoration of democracy even by violent means if non-violent methods would not work. Subsequently three pronged approach of Nepali Congress emerged for restoration of democracy. Subarna Shumshere tried to work through dialogue and cooperation with the King, Krishna Prasad Bhattarai through non-violent and non-cooperative means at home and that by B.P. Koirala by armed struggle from exile in India.

August 24, 1972 (Bhadra 9, 2029 B.S.) – Start of armed action led by B.P. Koirala. For that on November 17, 1975 (Mansir 1, 2032 B.S.) he was sentenced to death in absentia. The state of Emergency in India however, seriously obstructed the Nepali revolutionary movement.

February 12, 1976 (Falgun 1, 2025 B.S.) – K.P. Bhattarai – nominated as Acting President of the Nepali Congress Party by President B.P. Koirala.

December 30, 1976 (Paush 16, 2033 B.S.) – Return of B.P. Koirala from exile in India following the new policy of "National Reconciliation" advocating an understanding between the King and people for the restoration of democracy.

May 24, 1979 (Jeth 10, 2036 B.S.) – King Birendra's proclamation to hold a National Referendum following student's revolt against Panchayat's repressive measures. Nepali Congress participated at the referendum; more than 45% of the votes on official count was in favour of the multi-party system.

July 21, 1982 (Shrawan 6, 2039 B.S.) – B.P. Koirala passed away. A collective leadership of Ganesh Man Singh, Krishna Prasad Bhattarai and Girija Prasad Koirala, emerges. The first National Conference of Nepali Congress in still banned state was held in Kathmandu reiterating its stand on struggle for restoration of democracy.

May 23, 1985 (Jeth 10, 2042 B.S.) – Nepali Congress organized a nationwide Civil Disobedience Movement against the Panchayat System in which more than 12000 party workers and sympathizers voluntarily went to jail for several months.

January 18, 1990 (Magh 5, 2046 B.S.) – Under the command of supreme leader Ganesh Man Singh, National Conference of Nepali Congress called for a decisive movement for the restoration of democracy, welcoming other political groups to join if they desire to do so.

February 18, 1990 (Falgun 7, 2046 B.S.) – Nepali Congress starts a Nation-wide Movement for Restoration of Democracy. It was joined by coalition of seven Communist Parties led by Nepal Communist Party (ML).

April 8, 1990 (Chaitra 26, 2046 B.S.) – Fall of Panchayat System and H.M. the King's Proclamation of Multi-Party System.

April 18, 1990 (Baishakh 5, 2047 B.S.) – Interim Government formed under the Prime Ministership of Nepali Congress Acting President Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, representing the three forces- King, Nepali Congress, and the Communists to prepare and enact Constitution 1990 to safeguard Constitutional Monarchy and people's sovereignty with multi-party democratic set-up, and hold election, accordingly.

May 12, 1991 (Baishakh 29, 2048 B.S.) – Election held nationwide. Nepali Congress secures majority (114 seats out 205) in the parliament.

May 30, 1991 (Jeth 16, 2048 B.S.) – Formation of elected Nepali Congress government under the Prime Ministership of Girija Prasad Koirala, the then General Secretary.

January 17, 1992 (Falgun 3, 2049 B.S.) – K. P. Bhattarai – elected as the Party President by the Eighth National Convention held at Kalwalgurhi, Jhapa. Due to the ban on the political parties, the Eighth National Convention was held 31 years after the Seventh Convention.

November 1994 (Kartik 2051 B.S.) – Mid-term election held nationwide, minority government of CPN (UML) formed, different coalition government formed after the failure of minority government.

May 11, 1996 (Baishakh 29, 2053 B.S.) – Grija Prasad Koirala – elected as Party President by the Ninth National Convention held at Kathmandu.

September 18, 1997 (Ashwin 2, 2054 B.S.) – Supreme Leader Ganesh Man Singh passed away.

May 3 & 17, 1999 (Baishakh 20 & Jeth 3, 2056 B.S.) – General election held nationwide. Nepali Congress secures majority (113 seats out of 205) in the parliament. Election Manifesto : Highlights – At a time when the world is about to enter into the 21st century, the Nepali Congress accepts the challenges of the future. The party will concentrate all its attention on the swift and sure transformation of socially and economically backward Nepal into a prosperous and developed nation by eradicating illiteracy, poverty, unemployment, corruption and checking the ever-growing prices.

June 29, 1999 (Ashadh 15, 2056 B.S.) – Formation of elected Nepali Congress government under the Prime Ministership of Krishna Prasad Bhattarai.

November 8-10, 1999 (Kartik 22-24, 2056 B.S.) – The General Secretary – Sushil Koirala led a six member delegation to participate in the 21st conference of the Socialist International Congress held in the French Capital Paris. Nepali Congress becomes the full member party of the Socialist International.

March 16, 2000 (Chaitra 3, 2056 B.S.) – K.P. Bhattarai resigned from the Post of Prime Minister.

March 18, 2000 (Chaitra 5, 2056 B.S.) – G.P. Koirala elected as the leader of the Nepali Congress Parliamentary Party after the resignation of K.P. Bhattarai as the Prime Minister.

January 22, 2001 (Magh 9, 2057 B.S.) – G.P. Koirala – re-elected as the Party President by the Tenth National Convention held at Pokhara, Kaski.

May 22, 2002 (Jesta 8, 2059) – Deuba dissolved House of Representatives without consulting the Party. Nepali Congress smells conspiracy in collusion with the king to derail democracy and suspends Deuba from party membership for breach of discipline.

June 18, 2002 (Ashad 4, 2059) – Deuba breaks the party, forms his own and calls it real Nepali Congress. Later on following the Election Commission verdict, the party was named Nepali Congress (Democratic).

October 4, 2002 (Aswin 18, 2002) – The king sacks Deuba and takes over power. The king started nominating Prime Minister and cabinet. Nepali Congress called it regression and decided to join hands with other political parties to start street agitation against the regressive royal rule. Joint street movement launched and continued with four other political parties including Nepal Communist Party (UML), Jan Morcha, Nepal, Nepal Sadvabana Party (Anandi Devi) and Nepal Peasants and Workers Party.

February 1, 2005 (Magh 19, 2061) – The king declared emergency and started his direct rule. Nepali Congress under G.P.Koirala's leadership took the lead rule in making a joint front against the royal rule. Nepali Congress (D) and Left front also joint the front. A Common Minimum Programme was announced. Koirala also made secret parleys with the Maoists in India who were continuing their violent insurgency in Nepal. These secret parleys eventually culminated in the twelve point agreement between the seven parties and the Maoists. The agreement defined a road map to restore democracy in Nepal and Maoists committed themselves to come to constitutional politics in a multy party framework.

August 30-September2, 2005 (Bhadra 14-17, 2062) – The 11th Party Convention reelected G.P. Koirala as the Party President. One major highlight of this convention was that it passed a resolution to delete constitutional monarchy from the party statute as one of its objectives.

April 9, 2006 (Chaitra 24, 2062) – the seven party front announced the nation- wide strike and protest programme to overthrow the royal rule. The People's Movement drew unprecedented participation and support from all over the country. The government resorted strong arm tactic by mobilising security forces to supress the daily demonstration. Two dozen people killed during the 19 day agitation.

April 26, 2006 (Baisak 13, 2063) – The king, unable to contain the movement, bowed to popular wishes. Announced the restoration of the House of Representatives. Handed over power to seven party front which chose Koirala as the Prime Minister.

May 18, 2006 (Jestha 4, 2063) – The House of Representatives makes a historic announcement by stripping all power and functions of the king. Declared it is the people and not the king who are sovereign.

ACHIVEMENTS OF NEPALI CONGRESS GOVERNMENT

The Nepali Congress was first voted to power in the first general election in 1959 under the leadership of charismatic B. P. Koirala. His short stint of 18-month government was marked by radical reforms in land relations, ownership of the forests and feudal practices. The government also stripped the feudal elements of their traditional privileges. Reforms were introduced in the taxation, development planning, industry and trade. The process of socio-economic transformation remained incomplete as the Koirala govenment together with the democratic constitution was brought to an end in 1961 following a royal coup to start an era of autocratic royal rule.

The Nepali Congress remained mostly in power since 1991 under the democratic constitution of 1990 following the popular movement which overthrew the notorious Panchayat regime led by the monarch. During its rule the Nepali Congress has left its legacy in many fronts which brought the country to a path of higher economic growth, poverty reduction, and progress in human development indicators. The government introduced the Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-97) and the Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002) with formation of National Development Council and Environment Policy Council. At the political front, it made efforts to institutionalize multi-party parliamentary democracy at the national level and local self-government both at urban and rural

level through elections. The government promoted freedom of expression, independent judiciary, economic liberalization, international peace and cooperation, and administrative, educational, taxation and fiscal reforms.

During the successive Nepali Congress governments, the structure of the economy underwent transformation with increased share of modern sectors like industry, trade and services. The role of private sector expanded and competetion in economic activities fostered. Under sweeping economic reforms, many loss making public enterprises were privatized; various licensing and permit systems which hindered economic growth were removed , and foreign exchange regime liberalized. Public investment got a boost in the social sector like education, health and rural development, and in the creation of infrastructure. Resettlement scheme was launched for the landless people. Poverty declined to 31 percent from a level of about 50 percent. Literacy improved to around 60 percent from about 40 in 1991. Infant and maternal mortality declined significantly. The longevity of an average Nepali increased by 10 years. Similarly, road network expanded and rural areas with access to electricity has now crossed 40 percent from a level of 10 percent in 1991.

In the political front, the most outstanding landmark of the party was the initiation by the party leader G.P. Koirala to open a dialogue with the Nepal Communist Party (Maoists) with a view to bringing them to constitutional and peaceful politics. It was under his leadership a Peace Accord was signed with the Maoists which brought the more than a decade old Maoist violent insurgency to an end. He successfully brought other major constitutional parties also together on a common programme. The common programme outlined the political process which involved the management of the Maoist arms and their combatants, declaration of an interim constitution, an interim parliament and the election to the constituent assembly which will draft a new constitution for the country.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The organizational structure of Nepali Congress is based on the Party Constitution of 1960 (amended on 1995, 1997 and 2001). party working committee comprises of a central committee comprising of the elected Party President, 18 elected members and 18 members nominated by the party President, all among the members of the General Council. The Vice-President, General Secretary, Joint General Secretary, Treasurer and other officials are appointed by the Party President from the CWC members.

Under the CWC, there are four other committees (Executive, Discipline, Election, Parliamentary) and 10 departments (Policy and Programme, Organization, Coordination, Parliamentary and Local Units, International Relations, Training, Publicity, Women, Research and Evaluation, Intellectuals and Entrepreneurs). The next tier above the CWC is the General Council comprising of 615 elected and 10 nominated members. At the highest level is the National Convention whose delegates comprise of 1435 elected and 30 nominated members, District Committees, Constituency Level Committees, Ward Committees for the urban municipalities Municipal Committees and Village committees. This all powerful body elects the party president and half of the central committee members and defines the broad policy and direction of the party.

In addition to this, several fraternal and sisterly front organizations such as Nepal Women Association, Nepal Students' Union, Nepal Trade Union Congress, Nepal Youth Forum, Nepal Deprived Peoples' Association, Nepal Peasants' Union are linked with the party.

The total Active Members of Nepali Congress are 101,000. The total Ordinary Members are recorded to be 500,000. However, it is estimated that the actual membership may run up to 1.2 million.

Party Ideology and Policies

In 1956, Nepali Congress formally adopted democratic socialism as its principal ideology. Since then, primarily guided by the thoughts of the late B.P. Koirala, the party has acquired a distinct identity, and it continues to work for the consolidation and stabilization of democracy and a society based on the value of pluralism. The party is conscious of its ongoing struggle against the destabilizing forces of extreme left and extreme right.

In the new economic situation of the world, seen during the 1990s and now the new century, the party is engaged, as other social democrats around the world, in evolving a strategy for national growth and development that would integrate the beneficial aspects of economic liberalization and globalization with upliftment of the most needy.

Nepali Congress believes in plural democracy with liberal values. It is firmly committed to human rights and rule of law. It believes that sovereignty lies with the people and they are the source of state power. It is against the use of violence when peaceful means for the propagation of one's ideas and programmes are are available. Like the European social democrats, Ideologically Nepali Congress represents a centrist philosophy. It is committed to economic growth with social justice and equity. The party believes in the strong state role in the social sector, poverty reduction, environment protection and building up infrastructure. It is committed to promote private investment in trade, industry, tourism and other economic sectors. It also believes in the importance of cooperative sector to protect the interest of small producers and units, wherever they are feasible. The NC government is committed to continue the process of economic liberalization. At the same time, it is also committed to a parallel strategy to prioritize allocation of funds, and has undertaken administrative initiatives for policies and programmes related to education, health and other basic human needs, and for the development of such infrastructure, skills and technologies as would empower the vast number of the impoverished and disadvantaged sections of society, and create opportunities for their economic and social upliftment. It believes in decentralization of power and devolution of authority to the lower level. It has always believed in inclusive democracy and empowerment of communities which have remained historically neglected.

Until recently, the party strongly supported the institution of constitutional monarchy for the country, together with parliamentary democracy. But after the royal takeover of 1 February 2004, its attitude towards monarchy started to change. Since the present monarch showed no sign of his commitment to popular sovereignty, the Eleventh Party General Convention passed a resolution which stated that it is no longer committed to constitutional monarchy and will remain open on the issue.

In foreign policy, Nepali Congress is committed for close ties of friendship and co-operation with Nepal's immediate neighbours – India and China – and advocates productive interaction with all SAARC nations. The party is against the use of any part of the country by any person or organization in activities prejudicial to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the neighbouring and friendly countries, and, in its turn, expects the same attitude towards Nepal from the international communities. The party also believes in the principles of the United Nations as guiding elements for the regulation of international relations. NC wants to further strengthen Nepal's role, as a democratic nation, in fostering greater understanding and friendship with all nations of the world. NC also is grateful to those nations who have contributed in Nepal's socio-economic development efforts.

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